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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS AND
CROSS-STRAIT RELATIONS

1. Summary: Major Taiwan newspapers May 17 carried on their front pages the report on Taiwan's failure to gain participation in the World Health Assembly as an observer. Taiwan's biggest newspaper, pro-independence "Liberty Times" ran a banner headline in the first page that read: "21 Countries Voiced Their Supports for Taiwan's Bid to Participate in the WHA." Both pro-status quo "China Times" and pro-unification "United Daily News" carried similar banners on their front pages that read: "Participation in the WHA, the Ninth Failure."

2. With regard to editorials, pro-independence "Liberty Times" commented on Saturday's National Assembly elections and said the lowest-ever election turnout in Taiwan indicates that the public is not satisfied with the dishonesty of both the ruling and opposition parties. Pro-unification "United Daily News" proposed different interpretations of "two sides of the Strait, one China," which was a consensus reached between PFP Chairman James Soong and China's President Hu Jintao. The editorial of the "United Daily News" also commented on "one China defined by the Constitution" as the key to solving the current deadlock on cross-strait relations.

A) "Sincerely Facing Democracy, Sincerely Facing Taiwan,
Sincerely Facing the People"

An editorial of pro-independence "Liberty Times"
[circulation: 800,000] said (5/17):

"Frankly speaking, the reason for President Chen Shui-bian's criticizing Lien Chan, James Soong and even Lee Teng-hui and the Taiwan Solidarity Union before the election was entirely because of political pressure. What political pressure? That is, President Chen has violated his campaign promises and announced that he would no longer seek rectification of Taiwan's name and a new constitution. ."

"Especially noteworthy is the 23 percent record low turnout of the National Assembly election. This phenomenon is not accidental. It is because many people chose to 'abstain' to express their dissatisfaction with the ruling and opposition parties. The so-called Bian-Soong meeting, Lien-Hu meeting and Soong-Hu meeting, or even the possible Bian-Hu meeting, are all very abnormal moves from the perspective of democratic practices. This is not to totally deny the value of communications between ruling and opposition parties or between the two sides across the Strait, but to say that politicians are cheating the voters when they violate their campaign promises and deviate from their party platforms. Under the circumstances, voters certainly have the right to penalize them by taking active or passive measures. ."

B) "Is 'Two Sides of the Strait, One China' the same as 'One China, Different Interpretations' or 'Each Party Interprets One China'?"

The pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation:
600,000] editorialized (5/17):

[PAS Note: This editorial was a linguistic play-on-words in Chinese. Our translation is meant to give the flavor of the opinion but there may be differences of opinion on the exact translation of individual clauses.]

"Different positions on 'two sides of the Strait, one China' may lead to different interpretations, such as: 'the status-quo across the Strait is one China,' 'two sides of the Strait are ruled separately, one China in the future,' 'two sides of the Strait share one China,' 'two sides of the Strait separate one China,' 'two sides of the Strait interpret the contents of one China separately,' 'two sides of the Strait interprets the principle of one China.' These interpretations are logical. However, if the meaning of a political term is too diffuse or if one cannot interpret a political term firmly, the term is hardly practical. This is the reason why society has different interpretations and evaluations of the statement 'two sides of the Strait, One China. ."

". PFP Chairman James Soong said 'two sides of the Strait,

One China' is exactly `one China defined by the Constitution.' This happens to be the key point. The current deadlock is the result of the Chen administration's denial of `one China defined by the Constitution.' If Taiwan does not even admit `one China defined by the Constitution,' how can China make concessions regarding `one China with different interpretations,' and how can China's concessions be useful?

"President Chen Shui-bian denies any statement regarding `one China,' including `one China defined by the Constitution.' And James Soong cannot cover this up for Chen. Under the current situation, it is useless even if we interpret `two sides of the Strait, one China' as `one China with different interpretations.' And it would be a setback if we interpret `two sides of the Strait, one China' as `each party interprets one China (policy).'"

PAAL